

Your Resume: Translating Military Experience for Civilian Employment

Gather Information

Before you start to write your resume, it helps to have all the information you'll need gathered. Your **Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET)-DD Form 2586** is extremely helpful, as it lists all of your military education, experience, and training. Additionally, gather information about anything else you'll want on your resume, such as civilian education and/or employment, professional organizations, community involvement, awards/honors, etc.

Federal vs. Private Sector

Federal resumes require specific information to be included that is not needed in the private sector, such as the job announcement number, country of citizenship, and veterans' preference information. While many of the same concepts apply when writing either type of resume, it is important to research exactly what is expected for the industry or field you are applying in to, and to keep these things in mind as you create your resume.

Make an Inventory of Your Skills

Make a list of the skills needed for your desired profession or industry. What skills make up a successful person in that field? Then, make a list of the skills you used during your service. Try to think beyond just the functions of your position, and focus rather on the skills or expertise you demonstrated while carrying out that function. For example, an infantryman may not be able to translate their functions directly to a civilian career, but the teamwork, discipline, and leadership experiences they provide are helpful in many civilian occupations.

Give the Full Scope

Include a full range of your skills when writing your resume. Focus on all types of skills that you can bring to the job, including *technical skills, interpersonal skills, or leadership skills*.

Avoid Jargon

Avoid using the specific or technical language from the military experiences you've had. Instead, find a way to describe your experience using civilian terms or the vocabulary of the industry you will be entering into. For example, instead of using the words "squad" or "platoon," consider using the word "team."

Target Your Resume

Each resume you create should be tailored for the position or industry you are applying for. Refer to the list of skills you create to ensure that you are highlighting the most relevant and important information on your resume.

Employment Resources for Veterans

For a more comprehensive list of available resources, please visit the Career Development Center website.

<p>Career OneStop for Veterans www.careeronestop.org/ReEmployment/Veterans/default.aspx</p>
<p>VetSuccess—Department of Veterans Affairs https://www.vetsuccess.va.gov/public/career_and_jobs.html</p>
<p>Federal Employment and Job Seeking Resources for Veterans www.fedshirevets.gov</p>
<p>VA for Vets Employment Resources https://vaforvets.va.gov/Pages/default.aspx</p>
<p>Military and Veterans Career Center www.military.com/veteran-jobs</p>
<p>Homeland Security—Tips for Writing a Federal Resume www.dhs.gov/tips-writing-federal-resume</p>
<p>Department of Defense—Veterans Programs www.godefense.cpms.osd.mil/veterans/specialveteransprograms.aspx</p>
<p>Department of Labor—Veterans Employment Services www.dol.gov/vets</p>

Ace the Interview: Tips for Civilian Employment Interviews

Research

1. Research the company you are interviewing with for basic information about their mission, values, leadership, community involvement, etc. Tip: Find ways to connect yourself to the company, such as a value you have that is clearly in line with the company's mission
2. Research the specific position you are interviewing for to identify the skills and traits the company is looking for in their new hire.
 - How can you show them that you have these skills or traits?
 - What experiences have you had, military or civilian, that demonstrate these skills?

Avoid Jargon

Similar to your resume, you want to avoid using military acronyms, ranks, or jargon when talking about your experiences—find ways to describe your experiences using the language of the equivalent civilian career or industry.

- How can you “translate” your experience into civilian language without reducing the magnitude of responsibilities?
- What skills can you highlight from your military experiences that are relevant to the industry you are seeking to break into?

Be Specific

Whenever possible, use specific examples to describe your skills and experiences. Rather than just saying you are a leader, give an example of a situation you were in that clearly shows your leadership skills. Highlighting specific situations or stories will bring credibility to the things you are saying, and it will be a memorable talking point to help you stand out in an interviewer's mind.

Generate Questions

Brainstorm a list of questions to ask the employer during the interview. Coming prepared with a list of questions conveys your professionalism and dedication to this position. Topics to avoid: avoid asking anything about compensation or benefits. Also, avoid bringing up things that can be easily learned on their website. Asking those questions will imply that you didn't do any research ahead of time.

Practice

Practice answering interview questions prior to the real thing. Take time to write down your answers to common interview questions; writing answers out will help to organize your thoughts. Practice speaking out loud to become more comfortable with hearing your own voice and how you answer questions.

- Practicing interviewing with friends, family members, career advisers, and alone in the mirror can help reduce anxiety prior to interviews.
- Practice speaking out loud, but don't try to memorize every answer. The goal is to sound comfortable, not rehearsed.

Additional Tips

- Be prepared—bring with you multiple copies of your resume and other documents to the interview. Plan to arrive 10–15 minutes earlier than your scheduled appointment and know who you are interviewing with.
- Show enthusiasm. Use verbal and nonverbal cues to convey your excitement for this opportunity.
- Follow up each interview with a personalized thank you letter or email.

Your Career Advising Appointment: What Should You Bring?

To get the most out of your first meeting with a Career Adviser, be prepared with the following:

1. An idea of what you'd like to discuss and/or what you'd like to get out of the appointment.
2. Any previous or current versions of your resume/CV, cover letters, etc.
3. A description of your job duties for each position held in the military.
 - Your Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) form will be helpful for this, as will the various online resources available that contain a comprehensive list of job functions for various military positions.
4. Job descriptions for the types of positions or internships you are currently interested in.